

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126037
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	340900
Inspection dates	23–24 March 2010
Reporting inspector	David Collard

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	A Lucas
Headteacher	K Amaladoss
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Twenty three lessons or parts of lessons were observed taught by eleven teachers. Inspectors also looked at many other aspects of the school's work, held discussions with staff, pupils and governors and evaluated documentation. They also analysed 48 parental questionnaires, approximately 100 pupil questionnaires and also responses from most of the staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether pupils in all years were making the progress that they should and particularly so in the upper part of the school
- whether teaching and learning had improved from being satisfactory at the last inspection
- whether there were any exemplary areas of the provision or outcomes for pupils.

Information about the school

This urban, average-sized school serves its local populace. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly similar to the national average, although there is an above average proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs. Children start part time in the Reception year. While broadly average, there is a rising proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups, mainly eastern European. Amongst other national recognitions, the school has gained an International School Award, Silver Artsmark, National Healthy Schools Award and the Dyslexia Friendly award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This good school has come a long way since its last inspection. Within a strong Christian ethos, a number of elements are outstanding. Through some staffing changes and close monitoring, teaching is now consistently good which means that pupils progress well and, by Year 6, most attain at least average standards. The care and support for pupils' development is exemplary, something many parents and carers agree with. The determined approach of the newly-formed leadership team has enhanced the provision and environment of the school and raised the expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving. Governors closely monitor the school's work through their formal committee structure, but also with some working regularly with pupils. These positive moves forward, along with better teaching and learning, all point to a school with a good capacity to continue improving.

Pupils really enjoy school and, in discussion, say that the new approach to the creative curriculum, whilst it still needs some refining, is making them see a purpose for their learning. One pupil noted that the new topics are really exciting and make her look forward to coming to school in the morning. Behaviour is good. There are just a small number of pupils who exhibit more challenging behaviour. This is dealt with calmly and effectively and the high level of support means learning is not disrupted.

Children get off to a good start in the Reception classes and quickly settle into the routines. Through the rest of the school, pupils continue to make good progress in both basic skills and in their ability to work independently. This is strongly encouraged through regular self-initiated tasks linked well to homework which is geared towards encouraging pupils to think in a style which is best suited to them. In the past, progress was better through Years 1 and 2 than through Years 3 to 6. Things are more stable now. For example, progress rates in English in the national tests in 2009 were significantly better than those in other schools. Nevertheless, through its good self-evaluation, the school rightly recognises that standards could continue to be improved, particularly for those in the middle ability range. Challenging targets have been set to ensure this is achieved.

The school, through its work both nationally and internationally, is developing excellent community cohesion strategies. In addition, its work on counselling children and supporting those who are vulnerable is very well advanced. Recently, those from minority ethnic groups have benefited from a first language assistant and the school has developed a high profile locally in working with families from different cultures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- By July 2011 ensure 83% of pupils in Year 6, who have been at the school since Year 3, achieve the expected levels for their age in both English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring all pupils in the middle ability range make good progress
 - building on the work done so far on the creative curriculum so it develops pupils' thinking skills.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

On entry, children's development is below that expected for their age. However, by Year 2, pupils have caught up and are attaining broadly average standards. There has been a steady rise in pupils' attainment in Year 6 since 2007 in English, mathematics and science. There are still some differences between groups. Last year, for example, the middle ability girls did not do as well in mathematics. Stringent analysis is ensuring that now those at risk of underachievement are being supported well. Small or individual group work is being used to plug gaps in learning and, in Years 5 and 6, setting has been successfully introduced to enable pupils of all abilities to progress well and at similar rates. Consequently, against national figures, there are higher proportions reaching the age expected level by the time they leave.

Pupils want to succeed. They can talk about their current levels and what they need to do to move on, demonstrating their high aspirations for the future. These basic skills are being enhanced through highly creative use of links between subjects. A wonderful class assembly on the Egyptians, where pupils performed very confidently, was followed by a literacy lesson which exploited pupils' interest in developing questioning and research techniques very well. In another class, a round-robin set of tasks in science was helping pupils prepare for their forthcoming tests in a fun way, while at the same time ensuring pupils reinforced the knowledge they had already gained. Those with English as an additional language are supported well and are soon able to converse easily with their friends. They are able to seek help from a native speaker and so not only the spoken word is improved but also written English. Good identification of need and the consequent support enable those with special needs and/or disabilities and those with statements of special educational needs to make good progress, some better than expected, but from much lower starting points.

Pupils have excellent understanding of keeping safe and leading a healthy lifestyle. They are keen ambassadors in promoting the wider community including working with the local council and with schools both at home and abroad. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their video conference with South Africa and, in the subsequent reports, wrote about how they had learned that 'while some are, not all African families are poor and it is easy to get the wrong message'. The school also makes very innovative use of the gardens for spiritual development. Many examples such as these provide evidence of the outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding that pupils have developed and their understanding and tolerance of different cultures.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Good teaching is the norm. Lessons are characterised by well thought out planning making real links between subjects. For example, one younger class enthusiastically worked on providing Paddington Bear with memories of his visit and then started to count in twos while deciding how many sandwiches they needed for their teddy bear's picnic. Older pupils proudly showed their scaled version of Nottingham Castle in which they had needed to learn about circumference to help them build the turrets. In addition, teaching assistants make a valuable contribution. This all helps make learning relevant, motivating and interesting. Lessons usually move at a good pace, although on just a few occasions the learning is not geared well enough to each individual's rate of progress. When this happens, pupils do not learn as much as they could. There are a number of budding artists, musicians, sportspeople and linguists whose achievements are celebrated in wall displays or performances. Marking is used well and both informal conversations and written comments help pupils and teachers understand what is needed next.

The recent restructuring of the curriculum is beginning to work well. While the school is

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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already planning some amendments, there are already a number of positive features. Each topic is, as far as possible, developed with the pupils and is completed by a 'fabulous finish'. This often also involves parents and carers being able to share the work with their children while enjoying a cup of tea and a biscuit! French teaching for those in Years 3 to 6 is exemplary.

Outstanding systems and procedures ensure that pupils are extremely well cared for. There are very high levels of expertise in counselling, working with vulnerable children and developing the expertise of adults. This work has been recognised more widely in the locality with staff now leading the training in other settings.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and her newly-appointed senior team bring complementary strengths and a desire to drive forward improvements so that the school becomes one of the best. There is a realistic understanding of how to improve, and all staff are expected to play their part. The School Improvement Strategy Team, which includes governors, senior and middle leaders, work effectively on school priorities. The effective headteacher has taken a firm lead and middle and senior leaders are now in a good position to take on greater autonomy in driving the school forward. Monitoring is effective and teachers are held accountable for the achievement of their class. Often, their own personal and challenging targets reflect where there has been relatively less progress for particular groups and how this needs to be addressed. Consequently, equality of opportunity is good. Since the last inspection, staffing difficulties have caused improvements to falter somewhat. However, the school is now on an upward trend and this can be seen in the improved results by Year 6, better consistency in teaching, and in the improved provision for pupils. Governors hold the school to account and, through their regular visits, have a good understanding of the day-to-day issues facing the school. The recent appointment of a specialist liaison governor for the community means that the needs of different groups are more closely monitored and that there is no discrimination. Governors and staff also have an extremely clear understanding of developing community cohesion locally, nationally and internationally. The International School Award demonstrates how successful this has been. Safeguarding procedures are very highly effective, which is no surprise since it is of prime importance to the school that pupils should always feel safe and secure.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The good outcomes for children in their Reception year have come about because the effective provision ensures that children enjoy the experiences offered to them and, as a result they, make good progress. Early on, social and personal skills are a priority and form the basis for all learning. Children are encouraged to play and cooperate with each other and to take turns, such as when playing in the sand or riding their trikes. Harmonious relationships mean that children interact well with each other and with the adults. Those from different ethnic backgrounds get on with everybody and are provided with good support if they are at an early stage of learning English. There is good movement between inside and the redeveloped outside area. However, this outside classroom does not, as yet, have enough literacy or numeracy prompts that would extend children's learning as well as it does in the indoor classroom. Effective leadership engenders good teamwork amongst the adults and progress is carefully tracked. This ensures that children are provided with each new step in their learning and the observations confirm how well everyone is achieving. The established key worker scheme has recently been reviewed and will, in due course, provide further support to the families. These younger children enjoy the friendship partners they have with older pupils, such as when having lunch or through having the opportunity to see each other's work during assemblies.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The response rate from parents and carers was low. Those who returned the questionnaire were overwhelmingly supportive of the school and all but one response indicated that overall, parents and carers were happy with the experience their child has at the school. There were very few negative comments. The highest concern, although relatively minor, was about how well pupils are prepared for their future well-being. Inspectors found that pupils are being prepared well for their future lives and that this is being improved through a more relevant and appropriate curriculum. The views reflected in this questionnaire closely mirror the school's own surveys.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 48 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 242 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	69	15	31	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	69	14	29	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	54	20	42	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	48	23	48	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	27	56	18	38	3	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	48	23	48	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	69	11	23	2	4	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	19	40	22	46	4	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	46	24	50	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	38	25	52	2	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	38	24	50	2	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	28	58	15	31	2	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	58	17	35	1	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



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25 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Bognor Regis PO21 1DJ

Thank you for making us so welcome during our recent visit. We enjoyed talking to so many of you and sharing your thoughts about St Mary's. We agree with what we heard from many of you that yours is a good school. As I promised I have included the main points of our report below.

- You told us that you thought behaviour was good. We agree. We were very impressed with how well you concentrate in lessons and how well you are able to get on with your work.
- You make good progress in your lessons because you are taught well. Your lessons are interesting and often exciting. We especially enjoyed seeing all the many different topics you have been doing and the work you have produced. Your parents and carers should be very proud.
- We saw that the new approach to different subjects is having a positive effect, something which a number of you remarked on. This is all helping you see a purpose in what you are learning and encouraging you to think hard. Keep up the good work!
- We have said that there are some outstanding things going on in your school. You are looked after extremely well, you have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe, fit and healthy and the school has made sure that all the safeguarding procedures are highly effective.
- We have also said that you have an excellent understanding of how cultures and traditions are different to your own. This is because you have the opportunity to see these for yourselves, such as through your work with another school in Manchester and the video-conferencing you had with somebody from a different country.

Keep working hard so that you make the best possible progress. To help you do this we have asked that the staff make sure that more of you reach the expected levels in English and mathematics by the time you leave. We have set this to be really

challenging so make sure you play your part in helping.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Collard

Lead inspector

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